

# **Primary school parents fighting in the playground**

**Calls have been made for community policing to be stepped-up at an Edinburgh primary school where staff “regularly feel threatened and unsafe at work”.**

Incidents of parents fighting in the playground and “aggression and violence” toward teachers and support staff have been reported at Ferryhill Primary School on Wester Drylaw Avenue.

The Drylaw school’s parent council said some fights had involved “dangerous weapons” such as poles and hammers.

This month members threatened to take their children out of school in protest at a lack of action to address growing safety fears, however called-off the ‘strike day’ following a commitment from the council that new measures would be put in place to stem the anti-social behaviour.

And now a union is calling for a community policing presence at the school to deal with the behaviours of “a minority of parents”.

Pauline Henderson, convener of communities and families for Unison Edinburgh, said officers should be at the school at the beginning and end of the school day “when the behaviours are at their worst” starting after the summer break.

She said: “In the last few months we at Unison have been dealing with members who have been adversely affected by the

situation.

“Our members regularly feel threatened and unsafe at work as parents in the playground and the school building display aggressive behaviour towards other parents and staff.”

A statement issued by Ferryhill Primary Parent Council earlier this month said there were also reported instances of infant and nursery children leaving the premises and school grounds unattended “on more than one occasion”.

It said concerns of “bullying, violence, and racism” have led to “fear and apprehension among children and parents” and “reluctance in entering the playground”.

It added: “Our foremost priority is to support the dedicated staff members of Ferryhill Primary School, who are working tirelessly to overcome these challenges.

“The school has devised a plan to navigate through these issues, but we acknowledge that this is a complex process that requires time and effort.”

The parents have demanded a time line is drawn up setting out when changes will be implemented by the council and police and said they would not rule out reviving plans for strike action if the situation does not improve.

Ms Henderson said: “The management team and head teacher within the school are extremely supportive of the whole staff and have put into place various initiatives to try and counteract and stem these behaviours, but unfortunately they have continued throughout the term spilling over into events where staff children and parents have all been affected.”

A Police Scotland spokesperson said: “Officers in Edinburgh are aware of a small number of incidents reported to police in the Wester Drylaw Avenue area over the past few months.

“We will continue to engage with our education partners to

respond to any concerns that are raised, and will focus our attention as required.”

